SAMUEL GOMPERS,

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

By Waldon Fawcett

(Standing) Samuel Gompers Jr. and his Daughter (Seated) Samuel Gompers Sr. his Wife and Daughter

Gompers, Mitchell, and Other Leaders of the National Civic Federation

President Gompers and his Cabinet

Gompers at Work

EACH recurring Labor Day, very naturally, serves to focus public attention on the commander-in-chief of organized labor in America. Not that Samuel Gompers is conspicuous in the affairs of the nation save on the annual holiday set aside in recognition of the power and influence of the toilers of the Republic. On the contrary, there is probably no man except the President of the United States whose activities are more extensive, more continuous, or of wider scope in behalf of humanitarian movements of every description. Indeed, the best evidence of the growing realization of the importance of having the co-operation of organized labor in all great public projects is found in the number of appeals which have been made to Samuel Gompers, in late years, to serve as one of the directors of national or international undertakings for the common good.

This recognition, which has become so marked during the past decade, has come to Mr. Gompers in part, of course, by reason of his official position as the president of the American Federation of Labor and the executive head of an army of 2,000,000 organized workmen. To a surprising degree, however, the invitations extended to Mr. Gompers to sit in council with other public men of the nation are to be construed as a personal tribute to this remarkable labor leader. The foremost men in all walks of life who have come in personal contact with President Gompers have been forced to recognize the mental power, the foresightedness and the good judgment of the foremost spokesman of organized labor. Some capitalists and other prominent men have, at the outset, gone into conference with Gompers, strong in preconceived prejudice against the "agitator." In nine cases out of ten, however, they have been won over to a respectful tolerance of his opinions. The views of Gompers, looking at things through the eyes of the labor partisan, have not always been their views, of course, but his opponents in debate in such councils have always been forced to recognize the honesty and sincerity of the man and his conscientious desire to do what is best for the myriad wage-earners whose monitor he is.

Latterly the recognition of the services and influence of Samuel Gompers, which was at first confined to this country, has extended beyond the Atlantic, and he bids fair to become, ere long, the most famous labor leader in the world, not even excepting the well-known leaders of the labor party in Great Britain. The prestige of Gompers abroad has been materially enhanced this summer in consequence of a lengthy visit he has paid to all the industrial sections of Europe. He has made numerous public addresses, has participated in important conferences and has otherwise voiced the ideas and ideals of American organized labor. Even as this meets the eyes of readers it is expected that Mr. Gompers will be returning from the Continent to Great Britain to participate in the great convention of the trades unions at Ipswich, England. President Gompers has made a careful and exhaustive study of industrial conditions abroad as they affect the workers, and it is expected that his observations will be reflected in the future policy of the great organization of which he has so long been the head.

For all that Mr. Gompers, by reason of his official activities, has of late years been occupying an increasingly conspicuous place in the public eye, singularly little has been disclosed regarding the home, family and private life of this remarkable organizer and labor field marshal. Yet Mr. Gompers is by instinct an essentially home man, and he is a "home man" in practice to as great an extent as his public duties will permit. No man was ever more engrossed with his life work than is Samuel Gompers, and the one note of regret in the enthusiasm he voices is due to the fact that, take it the year through, he spends almost one-third of his time on railroad trains and is absent from home considerably more than half of the time. There is no doubt that, on the basis of miles traveled, Samuel Gompers is one of the most-traveled of American public men. In this respect he is a worthy rival of President Taft and William Jennings Bryan.

The house which Samuel Gompers calls "home" is a modest, but comfortable, three-story brick structure within sight of the national Capitol Building at Washington, D. C. Marriage and the forming of new ties in new environments has resulted in a scattering of the Gompers clan, naturally a most united family. Of late years the household of the foremost figure of labordom has consisted of Mrs. Gompers, an unmarried daughter, the eldest son and the latter's daughter. The son, Mr. Samuel J. Gompers, does not live at home, but his dwelling is not far distant from that of his father, and during the latter's frequent absences the younger man acts as the man of the family. The granddaughter, Miss Florence M. Gompers, who is President Gompers' especial favorite, likewise spends much of her time at the homestead, and recently she became proficient in stenography and typewriting in order that she may be of practical assistance to her grandfather in the very considerable amount of work that he performs at home.

Mrs. Gompers, wife of the labor chieftain, is a woman of pleasing personality, who has not been deterred by her fondness for her home, or the responsibilities of rearing a large family, from taking a very active and intelligent interest in her husband's "missionary work" in behalf of organized labor. She and Mr. Gompers were married when they were both very young and when the young man was working at his trade as a cigarmaker, but she had opportunity from the outset to take a sympathetic interest in her husband's devotion to the cause of labor. In tribute to the comradeship with his wife which he has enjoyed all these years, Mr. Gompers said the other day: "I cannot remember the time when I was not married." He might have remarked with equal truth that he could not recall the time when he was not active in behalf of his fellow-workmen for since his fifteenth year he has been an advocate of the rights of labor and has been connected with the efforts to organize the working people.

Impelled by no social ambition beyond their own circle of chosen friends the women of the Gompers household have been singularly resolute in remaining in the background and avoiding publicity during the years that the husband and father has been occupying a niche in the contemporary hall of fame. With one member of the family, however, Miss Sadie Julia Gompers, youngest daughter of the labor leader, the public has recently had an opportunity to become acquainted, for Miss Gompers, following the example of the daughters of Senator La Follette, Tom L. Johnson and other public men, has lately adopted a stage career. Miss Gompers, who is a strikingly beautiful brunette, displayed marked musical ability in early childhood, and was educated under the best masters for the concert stage, but her ultimate ambition is in the field of light opera.

As Samuel Gompers is unique in his working methods and in his policy of welding workers of all classes in a close-knit organization, so likewise is he distinctive, as well as distinguished, in appearance. Most persons who for the first time attend an assemblage where he is to speak are somewhat taken by surprise by his short stature, but this is quickly forgotten when the labor chieftain begins his address, for he has a penetrating but well-modulated voice, and his delivery, from long experience in speaking in the open air, is excellent. Samuel Gompers, who is now in his fifty-ninth year, is an Englishman by birth, but he has few of the characteristics usually associated with that nationality. Probably the dominant distinguishing feature of his personal appearance is the massive head, sparsely covered with iron-gray hair, which is usually hidden by a black silk skullcap. Mr. Gompers is smooth-shaven and wears glasses, and in the course of his travels has been repeatedly mistaken for a college professor.

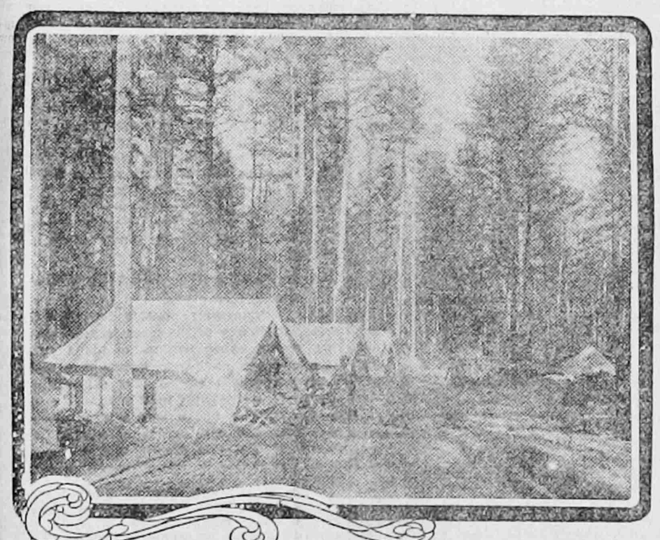
Any person who has the slightest appreciation of how absorbed President Gompers is in his work can readily believe his disclaimer that he has any other fads or hobbies. His work, which embraces everything from editorial work to public speaking, has the merit of variety, and it is doubtless this circumstance which enables Mr. Gompers to maintain himself physically fit, though taking almost no exercise in the ordinary acceptance of the turn. He says frankly that he has never felt that he could afford the luxury of a saddle horse and he is manifestly not of a temperament for golf. Walking is a form of exercise that the labor leader thoroughly enjoys if he can have the company of a congenial companion, but walking alone, merely for the sake of muscle-building, has no charms for this mentally active individual. In speaking of the matter sometime ago, Mr. Gompers remarked: "I like to have solitude for work, but at all other times I love companionship." "Yes," commented Mrs. Gompers, who had heard her husband's remark, "Mr. Gompers is so sociable that I do not believe that he would be satisfied to sit down for a cup of coffee if there be not some person to converse with meanwhile."

The grand marshal of the American army of organized labor is mighty unconventional in his working methods. We have it in his own words, above quoted, that he loves solitude for work, and to obtain the quietude conducive to the best effort he has acquired the habit of doing his most important work at night. Yet in seeming contradiction of this characteristic is the fact that Samuel Gompers is one of the few men in America who can work on trains and actually accomplish something. This is highly important in the case of President Gompers, for he has averaged 30,000 miles of railroad travel every year for the past 30 years, a total of 900,000 miles, being equivalent to more than seven years of continuous traveling. When Mr. Gompers becomes thoroughly immersed in his work he is largely oblivious to surroundings even when traveling, and there was one memorable occasion when the President of the A. F. of L. dashed out at a wayside station to dispatch a telegram and turned from the operator's desk just in time to see the train move off, carrying important papers which he had spread out around him in his section of the sleeper, and, worse yet, bearing away his hat, coat and vest and gold watch.

When President Gompers is at home he spends most of the daylight hours at a large office building where the general offices of the American Federation of Labor occupy several floors, and where he has a private office and the assistance of a young woman who is widely known as one of the most capable private secretaries in America. At night the head of the labor host isolates himself on the top floor of his residence, where he has fitted up a combination of workroom and library that he calls his "den." It is nothing unusual for him to be busy here, reading and writing, until 3 o'clock in the morning. Most of the writing, aside from correspondents it may be explained, is for the various official publications of the American Federation. President Gompers almost never writes out any of the numerous public addresses he delivers. The nearest he comes to it is to jot down on small slips of paper which may be held in the palm of the hand quotations or statistics which he may desire to embody in his remarks, and which it is essential shall be characterized by absolute accuracy to the smallest detail.

FOREST FIRES AND THEIR PREVENTION

By K. L. Smith



Timber Experts Trying to Solve the Fire Problem

Destructive Method of Lumbering, Showing the Great Quantities of Lumber Destroyed by Breaking Young Trees

Brush Should Be Burned when Snow is on the Ground

After a Fire

WHILE we have had forest fires that reached gigantic proportions, as the Miramichi fire of 1825 where on two and a half million acres every living thing was killed, and the fish died along the river banks; the Peshtigo fire of 1871, which covered over two thousand square miles in Wisconsin and in which nearly fifteen hundred people perished; and the Hinckley fire of 1894, when that town and six other places were destroyed, in some ways the fires of 1908 were the worst known. Expert foresters who have since been over the ground state that it is impossible to figure the damage done and that the waste was enormous.

The loss by forest fires in our country in the average year reaches fifty million dollars. This figure was far exceeded last year. The drouth, which was general, was chiefly contributory, but other adverse conditions helped, among them the indifference of people to small fires. The government had much to do in fighting fires in the national forests, but preventive measures kept the loss down to a minimum. The damage in a forest fire cannot be calculated in dollars and cents. Though there was comparatively a small loss of life in the 1908 fires, people for months lived in terror, fifty persons perished in Michigan and many suffered seriously from the effects. In the case of large trees an estimate can be placed on the damage, which grows greater as timber becomes more valuable, but it is not so easy to calculate the destruction to young, growing forest trees. Some idea can be gained when one reflects that it costs from six to twenty dollars an acre to plant tiny seedlings. If a million acres are burned over and all young growth destroyed it is clear the waste is enormous.

It is evident a more adequate system of forest protection is needed and even the indifferent have at last been aroused to see the necessity of some systematic crusade. Fortunately, we have a United States Forest Service and most states have a forestry department. It is to them we must look for an adequate solution of the problem, but they cannot act efficiently without the co-operation of individuals, settlers and lumbermen, the passing of favorable laws and facilities in the way of ample appropriations. Our forests cover an area of about 699-500,000 acres. In the Northwestern states once stretched the great white pine forests, along the Atlantic and Gulf coast lie the Southern pine trees, in the Mississippi Valley are hardwoods, the oak, hickory, ash and gum and on the Pacific coast the giant redwood and firs. Some parts of these areas are set aside for federal forest reserves and these are under the Bureau of Forestry. This bureau, composed of trained officers to administer and improve the reserved forested lands is always ready to give advice to individuals and forest owners and they have adopted a fire-fighting system within the National Forest's boundaries which has materially reduced the annual losses.

As a first step toward instituting a crusade against a recurrence of the fires of 1908, the national government sent Paul G. Redington and Raymond W. Pullman, capable officials of the forest service, to probe the situation and devise means for improving conditions in the future. Mr. Pullman visited the Lake districts and sought at first hand for remedial measures. In his review of the situation, Forester Redington says: "What is wanted is effort on the part of the government, the states, corporations and individuals. There should be adequate fire laws in every state where any forests are situated." There are those who advocate a national fire department to protect all forests, but this may take years to accomplish, if it is ever done. What is needed at once is that the legislatures of the various states pass better laws for the safeguarding of forests, that more money should be appropriated for this purpose and that men who ruthlessly set fire to forests should be punished.

A cause of forest fires are the sparks from locomotives and sawmills. Many of the latter are small and poorly protected. The danger from railroads is so great that Paul G. Redington proposes that railroads have patrolmen who could follow the trains as they traverse the forests and extinguish any small fire that might be started. Other causes of fire are campers, berry pickers and pleasure seekers who are careless in putting out fires in spite of the warnings that are posted. There are also factors beyond the control of mankind, such as lightning, which in one year started 250 forest fires in the national forests.

In the case of forest fires prevention is the first thing to be considered, for after a fire gains headway it is with the utmost difficulty extinguished. It is generally conceded that forest patrol is an essential, and that it ought to be universally adopted. The advocates of a national fire department suggest that we have a body of men trained and equipped, provided with special trains and spending their whole time in guarding the forests of America. Those who see the wisdom of our present state systems also call for forest patrol and point to the experience of the national forests. In these a ranger on guard travels over the district in which he has charge at regular intervals and keeps a careful lookout for any fires that may have started since his last patrol. In some places there are lookout points from which he can see smoke a long distance away and roads, trails, bridges and telephone lines help him to perform his mission. He follows trains and puts out fires that arise from this cause and he rides often along the route that people travel to see if they obey the warnings that are posted on trees.

By this patrol the government forest service reduced burnt over areas from 388,872 acres in 1904 to 109,410 in 1907, and in that same time the acreage of forests became three times larger. On the basis of this expense to the Forest Service the whole forest area of the United States could be patroled for about a cent an acre. This would mean a tremendous saving in timber losses. In Michigan the forest fire service is with the game and forest warden, who has 10 deputies, and they direct the supervisors of the towns, yet practically all parts of the upper peninsula and much of the lower peninsula suffered because there was no complete patrol. If any further argument were needed to impress the advisability of forest patrol it is coming from the best of our lumbermen, who are starting to do this themselves. Many lumbermen have their own men who are constantly going over the ground, and in some places the state authorizes these men to make arrests, if necessary. The discouraging feature of this patrol is that one lumberman may do this and the one next to him may do nothing, and so the argument arises, "Why protect my holdings if my neighbor will not take such precautions with his?"

It may seem strange to many that the best implements for fighting forest fires are the ax, the mattock, the spade and, in some cases, dynamite. The character of the country, timber, weather and time of day determine what method must be pursued. In swamps the fire travels slowly, but in dry, open woods it moves so quickly that the fire-fighter must go ahead and try to find an open ground to trench and backfire from there. Once in a while a fire moves so fast that a man cannot keep ahead of it. It springs from tree to tree and burns so hotly that animals flee as soon as it starts. Roaring flames, showers of sparks and dense smoke make a forest fire a thing of terror. Spring fires damage the trees which are full of sap and fall fires usually run deep.

Sixty-five lives a year have been lost on an average from forest fires, but this and the loss of timber are not the only damage. For instance, there is great destruction to new growth. Usually an additional growth of 20 cubic feet per acre is expected. The damage to soil fertility must also be considered. The humus or vegetable matter is destroyed, for the top soil is turned to ashes, and it takes many years to get back permanent fertility. In the same way the river courses and adjacent farms are liable to disaster from floods and drouth. Directly and indirectly we are all interested in the forests and the waters that rise among them. Hundreds of cotton mills, pulp mills, saw mills and factories of various kinds are dependent upon the regular flow of these rivers. Any one of these factors ought to be enough to prompt preventive measures.

Gifford Pinchot calls attention to the question that success or failure in the solution of the forest fire problem means "the continual use of the land or the perpetual burden of caring for vast barren wastes," and he adds, "The fire warden system has been fairly successful in places, but its fundamental weakness is that it is not a preventive system." In all our states for months before the immense conflagrations small fires burn by the hundreds and thousands. If the national forests can be protected so fires have decreased, there is no reason why forests outside cannot be properly administered. Forest fires can at least be checked, as shown in the experience of foreign countries. The co-operation of all people will do much toward abating the damage. Settlers alone can do much preventive work. In the national forest their help is considered an important agency, but too often they are indifferent. A settler may see smoke in the distance and think it is from another settler's camp. He hesitates about leaving his work to investigate and runs the chance of its being harmless—a chance in which he sometimes loses.

Those who have been agitating the conservation of the depleted forests feel hopeful the problem will be solved if settlers and practical lumbermen give their support. Successful forestry depends to a large extent on the solution of the forest fire problem, the harvesting of mature timber, the protection of young growth and reforestation, and the most important part of this practical system is the prevention of fires.

Mathematically Marvelous Idiot.

MANY have been the marvelous accomplishments along peculiar lines by individuals who in all other ways were idiotic. Blind Tom, the famous colored musician of a generation back, was not only sightless but semi-idiotic and subject to alarming convulsions. Recent observations by the famous scientist, Dr. Hermann Witzmann, of Vienna, of a man locked up as a congenital idiot show a remarkable mathematical freak in this man's brain.

This idiot is able to tell what day of the week it has been or will be on any selected day in the whole period, extending from the year 1000 until the year 2000. The answer to any such question, which would take a thorough mathematician some time to solve, this idiot can read off from his brain in a flash. In over a thousand questions he has never been caught by Dr. Witzmann in the slightest error.

Thus he was asked: "What was the day of the week on October 3, 1907? The reply was "Thursday." He can give the date of any Easter in the given period of a thousand years, and can give the number of days in any holiday period in the Roman Church.

This remarkable idiot can read and write only fairly, and is unable to do any simple problem in arithmetic. The only explanation offered by Dr. Witzmann is that this idiot had access in youth to a calendar table giving this special line of information for the exact period from 1000 to 2000 Anno Domini. While it is impossible for him to have memorized all these dates he is known to remember all the Easters and must have some unknown table imprinted on his unbalanced mind which enables him to read off all calendar questions when they are put to him.

Analyzing Meteoric Dust.

STAR dust has often been mentioned by astronomers, and the prevailing theory appears to be that much of the incalculable distances between the great heavenly bodies is thickly strewn with this fine metallic matter. It has now been analyzed and is found to consist of wonderfully hard and very minute hollow spheres of metal.

The metals in this meteoric dust are considered as debris or fragments left over from ancient worlds which went to pieces countless ages past under the wear and tear of the universe. The grains of metallic dust are much smaller than grains of sand and much harder than the hardest of steel bullets yet manufactured by man. They are perfectly rounded as if cast in the same mold and all are hollow. It is therefore evident that a peculiar action must come from the throwing off of fine particles of molten metal into the cold spaces between the various worlds.

They are formed from the bright trails left behind by comets and meteors. On coming into the earth's atmosphere meteors become molten. Then by the air pull behind each meteor there develops the bright trail of the shooting star phenomenon.

But when this bright trail cools off and the metal left behind in the air by the meteor becomes solid. It assumes the peculiar hollow and rounded form. These pellets drift down to the earth's surface gradually through the currents of air.

This star dust is constantly coming down to the earth. Almost any handful of dust from a sheltered spot contains them. They can be brought together by a maguet passed through the ordinary dirt and can then be observed under a microscope.